

# Steps in writing an Argumentative Essay

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1. Pick a topic, preferably something you care about. Here is a list of topics.

\*Affirmative Action \*Cell Phone Safety\*Cloning\*Death Penalty and Capital Punishment\*Gays In The Military\*Global Warming\*Gun Control\*Hate Crimes\*Health Care Reform\*Identity Theft\*Illegal Aliens\*Legalization of Prostitution\*Medical Marijuana\*Prisons: Punishment or Rehabilitation\*Same Sex Marriage\*Single Gender Education\*Stem Cell Research\*Women In Combat \*Felon Voting\*Effectiveness of Abstinence Education\*

2. Think about your opinion on the topic. (example, less gun control is good) What are your reasons for your opinion? List your reasons. (example, armed citizens make us safer, crime levels decrease, constitutional right to bear arms)

3. Search the following sources to back up your opinion; ProCon.org

[www.procon.org](http://www.procon.org)



Library Website

[www.southgatech.edu/library/topics](http://www.southgatech.edu/library/topics)

The logo for "Topics For Research" consists of the text "Topics For Research" in a white, serif font, centered within a solid blue rectangular box.

Topics For Research

Galileo

[www.galileo.usg.edu](http://www.galileo.usg.edu)



Google (use only newspaper articles or editorials)

New York Times

[topics.nytimes.com](http://topics.nytimes.com)

Keep track of the website addresses/sources (copy/paste them in your paper)

**NOTE: You need the full website address. If you are writing a paper about autism and used an article from medlineplus.gov you must include the exact website**

**address of the article, not just the website address of the site. So it must be the long form. Example below.**

**<http://m.medlineplus.gov/topic/autism.htm>**

**NOT *medlineplus.gov***

**4. Download a template for APA style [www.southgatech.edu/library/APA](http://www.southgatech.edu/library/APA)**

**5. Begin a rough draft following the structure (see essay format handout)**

**Introduction**

**Supporting Evidence Paragraphs**

**Conclusion**

**6. Use Citation Machine**

**Citationmachine.net**

**and plug in information from your sources (Title, Website, Author, Date) into CitationMachine to create your reference list. If your article does not list an author, use the name of the website as your author.**

**7. Copy and paste the full citations in to the reference list, located on the last page of your paper. Make sure you cite the sources you use in your text by listing the author and the year (Miller, 2011).**

**If you need a refresher on the library presentation go to**

**[www.southgatech.edu/library/videos/video04.wmv](http://www.southgatech.edu/library/videos/video04.wmv)**

**OR**

**[www.youtube.com/SGTCLIB](http://www.youtube.com/SGTCLIB)**

# Argumentative Essay Format

*\*Please note that this is only a sample format. There are many ways to organize an argumentative paper*

## ▪ INTRODUCTION

- 1-2 paragraphs tops
- **PURPOSE:** To set up and state one's opinion
- **OPTIONAL ELEMENTS**
  - Make your introductory paragraph **interesting**. How can you draw your readers in?
  - What **background information**, if any, do we need to know in order to understand your opinion? If you don't follow this paragraph with a background information paragraph, please insert that info here.
- **REQUIRED ELEMENTS**
  - If you're arguing about an issue or theory – provide brief explanation or your issue/theory.
  - **STATE** your opinion at the end of your introductory paragraph

Example: *Gun control is not one issue, but many. To some people gun control is a crime issue, to others it is a rights issue. Gun control is a safety issue, an education issue, a racial issue, and a political issue, among others. Within each of these issues there are those who want more gun control legislation and those who want less. On both sides of this issue opinions range from moderate to extreme.*

*Our society has passed laws regulating the ownership and use of firearms, and more legislation is being considered. Most of this legislation restricts, to some degree, the rights of individuals to possess or use firearms. Some restrictions may be necessary, but some recent legislation has gone too far. **Society benefits from firearms in the hands of responsible citizens. Attempts to keep firearms away from these citizens do more harm than good.***

## ▪ SUPPORTING EVIDENCE PARAGRAPH #1

- **PURPOSE:** To prove your argument. Usually is one paragraph but it can be longer.
- **Topic Sentence:** What is one item, fact, detail, or example you can tell your readers that will help them better understand your opinion/paper topic? Your answer should be the topic sentence for this paragraph.
- **Explain Topic Sentence:** Do you need to explain your topic sentence? If so, do so here.
- **Introduce Evidence:** Introduce your evidence either in a few words (As Dr. Brown states —... ) or in a full sentence (—To understand this issue we first need to look at statistics).
- **State Evidence:** What supporting evidence (reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and/or quotations) can you include to prove/support/explain your topic sentence?
- **Explain Evidence:** How should we read or interpret the evidence you are providing us? How does this evidence prove the point you are trying to make in this paragraph? Can be opinion based and is often at least 1-3 sentences.
- **Concluding Sentence:** End your paragraph with a concluding sentence that reasserts how the topic sentence of this paragraph helps up better understand and/or prove your paper's overall opinion.

Example: *The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution states: "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." The Founding Fathers included this in our Bill of Rights because they feared the Federal Government might oppress the population if the people did not have the means to defend themselves as a nation and as individuals (as cited in Halbrook 1984). This idea was not new. The Founding Fathers' thoughts on the right to keep and bear arms were influenced by Aristotle, Cicero, John Locke, and Algernon Sidney (Halbrook 1984).*

*The militia referred to cannot be construed as meaning the Army or National Guard, in the words of Samuel Adams: "The Militia is composed of free citizens" (as cited in Halbrook 1984). Additionally, George*

*Mason considered a "well regulated Militia" to be one "composed of . . . Gentlemen, Freeholders, and other Freemen" (as cited in Halbrook, 1984). The Revolutionary War was won with the help of "An armed populace composed of partisans, militias, independent companies, and the continental army . . ." (as cited in Halbrook, 1984)). It is obvious from this that the Founding Fathers thought that society benefited from firearms in the hands of the people.*

- SUPPORTING EVIDENCE PARAGRAPH #2, 3, 4 etc.
- Repeat above

*Example: The rationale given for most modern gun control legislation is "Crime Control." The Brady Bill is one example. The Brady Bill is named after James Brady, who was shot by John Hinckley during an assassination attempt on President Reagan in 1981. **Supporters of the Brady Bill used that incident to gain support for their gun control legislation, claiming it would reduce crime and save lives. The fact is that the background check and waiting period included in the Brady Bill would not have prevented John Hinckley from legally purchasing the handgun used in that incident.** Records show that "a police background was run on Hinckley four days before he purchased the revolver he used to shoot President Reagan and Jim Brady. The check showed he had no felony convictions in any jurisdiction. Neither had Hinckley any public record of mental illness" (American Rifleman, 1995).*

- CONCLUSION
- **PURPOSE:** Remind readers of your argument and supporting evidence
- Restates your paper's overall opinion and supporting evidence

*The Founding Fathers of our country won our freedom with firearms. After we won our independence the Founding Fathers included the right to keep and bear arms in the Constitution to ensure that the freedom they fought for would last. Throughout the history of this country firearms have been used to defend that freedom from both foreign aggressors and from violent criminal aggressors. Americans own and use firearms for many reasons, such as; hunting, organized sports competitions, informal recreational uses, and for protection. **Some legislation has been passed recently which restricts our firearms rights, and the shortcomings of these laws have been exposed. Fortunately, there has also been good legislation passed, like Arizona's Concealed Carry Law, which give residents of this state a better chance to defend themselves against violent crime. Society does benefit from firearms in the hands of responsible citizens. It is our responsibility to use them properly and safely.***

Gun Control Essay excerpts courtesy of <http://waterguy.us/gunessay.htm>

## Argumentative Essay Outline

### Introduction

### Supporting Evidence #1

### Supporting Evidence #2

### Supporting Evidence #3

### Conclusion